ABSTRACT ~~OF THE DISCLOSURE~~

The invention presents a[[n]] multilayer optical recording medium ~~element~~ with which information is recorded or reproduced using an optical apparatus that can record or reproduce signals with a first optical recording medium having only one recording layer or a second optical recording medium having a plurality of recording layers. The optical recording/reproducing apparatus includes a light source and a spherical aberration correction means which is arranged between the optical recording medium and the light source. The light source includes a semiconductor laser element which emits a laser beam with a wavelength in the range of 390nm to 420nm. The spherical aberration correction means includes an objective lens with a NA in the range of 0.7 to 0.9. The recording medium provides minimal focal correction by the spherical aberration correction means, regardless of whether a single layer or a multilayer recording medium is used ~~head can be configured, in which there is little deterioration of the correctional effect when the objective lens shifts, as well as an optical head and an optical recording/reproducing apparatus using such an optical element. The invention also presents a novel optical recording/reproducing apparatus and optical recording/reproducing method. The optical element, includes a first voltage application electrode 13, a first opposing electrode 17 arranged in opposition to the first voltage application electrode 13, and a first phase changing layer 15 arranged between the first voltage application electrode 13 and the first opposing electrode 17. By changing a voltage between the first voltage application electrode 13 and the first opposing electrode 17, a phase that converts plane waves into spherical waves is imparted on light that is incident on the first phase changing layer 15~~.